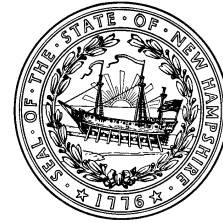


NH Department of Health and Human Services
129 Pleasant Street – Hugh Gallen State Office Park
Concord, NH 03301



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CONTACT
Public Information Office
603-271-9388
Twitter: NHDHHSPIO
Facebook: NHDepartmentOfHealthAndHumanServices

DHHS Issues Reminder to Residents: Take Simple Steps to Stop the Spread of Norovirus This Season

Concord, NH – The winter season is typically the time of year when there is an increase in the incidence of gastrointestinal illness, often caused by norovirus, so the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is offering tips to help guard against the spread of this illness. This season so far is no exception from previous years, with many reports of illness coming into the Division of Public Health Services (DPHS).

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause gastrointestinal illness or what many people refer to as “the stomach flu.” Though they have nothing to do with the flu (also called influenza), which is a respiratory illness, noroviruses are highly contagious and can be responsible for large outbreaks in communal settings such as healthcare facilities, schools, and childcare centers.

“New Hampshire residents can play an important role in helping to stop the spread of norovirus and other illnesses,” said DHHS Public Health Director Dr. José Montero, “but it requires that all of us be vigilant in our personal hygiene habits.”

Noroviruses can be transmitted a number of ways, including through person-to-person contact, consumption of contaminated food and water, airborne droplets of vomit, and contact with contaminated surfaces, such as doorknobs and faucets. Symptoms of the illness include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, fever, and headache.

There is no specific treatment for norovirus and symptoms typically resolve within 48 hours. However, DPHS recommends following these common sense steps to aid in prevention:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or caring for a household member with symptoms of norovirus
- Wash hands with soap and warm water before preparing or eating food
- Cook shellfish thoroughly before eating
- Wash raw vegetables before eating
- Food service workers with symptoms of norovirus should not prepare or touch food
- Health care workers with norovirus symptoms should stay home from work
- Children with norovirus symptoms should stay home from school or child care.

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“Following these simple measures will help more New Hampshire residents stay healthy during this winter season,” Montero said. The Division of Public Health Services will continue monitoring norovirus activity in New Hampshire. More information about noroviruses is available on the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov and on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. To report an outbreak, contact DPHS’ Bureau of Infectious Disease Control and Surveillance at 603-271-4496.

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